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# **Religiosity in Rice Harvesting Ritual (A Case Study on Dayak's Religious Phenomena in West Borneo)**

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## Abstrac

Dayak in West Borneo already have a certain religion to guide their way of life. However, in rice harvesting ritual, animism and dynamism can be obviously seen. The aim of this research is to know the reason of doing rice harvesting ritual. Used descriptive qualitative method in the form of case study. Fundamental reasons that underlie rice harvesting ritual that is the Dayak are to preserve the culture and respect the ancestors, they think that culture exists before religion does. They believe that either culture and religion refer to God though there are differences on the ways used in the ritual.

Keywords: Rice harvesting ritual, religiosity, animism and dynamism

**Religiosidad en ritual de cosecha de arroz  
(Un estudio de caso sobre los fenómenos religiosos de Dayak  
en el oeste de Borneo)**

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## Resumen

Dayak en el oeste de Borneo ya tiene una cierta religión para guiar su forma de vida. Sin embargo, en el ritual de cosecha de arroz, obviamente se puede ver animismo y dinamismo. El objetivo de esta investigación es conocer la razón de hacer el ritual de cosecha de arroz. Se utilizó el método cualitativo descriptivo en forma de estudio de caso. Las razones fundamentales que subyacen al ritual de cosecha de arroz que es el Dayak son para preservar la cultura y respetar a los antepasados, piensan que la cultura existe antes que la religión. Creen que la cultura y la religión se refieren a Dios, aunque existen diferencias en las formas utilizadas en el ritual.

Palabras clave: ritual de cosecha de arroz, religiosidad, animismo y dinamismo.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Dayak are known as indigenous people who inhabit West Borneo. In their daily life, traditional ways of living are still employed. The traditional ways of living make them to live in isolated places. This is in accordance to the meaning of Dayak defined by European researchers in 1800s as tribal, non-Moslem, primitive, uncivilized, and other negative images (Aloy et al 2008: 11). This situation encourages them to uphold the tradition. Dayak who live in Jagoi Babang, Bengkayang still preserve the possessed and inherited values to create the whole and integrated life principles. Herianto et al. state that Dayak Ot Danum who live in Central Borneo still have certain belief, custom, culture, and empirical data related to natural phenomenon and history of environmental change process (2018: 130). The knowledge learnt is realized in their daily life. It is even shown on their houses, clothes, dances, literature works, and others (Halim 2015: 10).

Religiosity is a form of one's faith, doing all the things in accordance to his/her faith wholeheartedly (Buzdar and Ali 2014: 985). In the process of rice harvesting, Dayak cast spell as one of their ways of praying. Meanwhile, in celebrating religious holiday, religious attitude can be seen from the process of annual rice harvesting done by all Dayak in West Borneo. Religiosity shown in rice harvesting ritual tends to show animism and dynamism. As stated by Maunati (2004: 80), in the past, almost all of Dayak believe in animism.

According to Pentikamen (1997: 19); animism is a belief trusted by people that certain spirit dwells in things, souls, ghosts, humans, animals, plants, and others. Those who belief in animism usually think that stone, tree, mountain, wild animal, wind, and household supply have soul (Gilmore 1919: 12). In

the process of rice harvesting ritual, they believe that the amount of their harvest is strongly related with the deal between the farmers and the spirit who controls the harvest (Setyawan 2010: 104). Animism is related to worshipping spirit or soul while dynamism is related to worshipping things believed to have certain might.

As the time passed by, many people of Dayak become Moslem (Darmadi 2017: 42). In contrast, Maunati (2004: 80) states that Dayak are associated with Christian. Nasrullah expounds that Dayak are commonly identified as Christian and Moslem though some of them still believe in their ancestors' faith Kaharingan (2014: 39) and Hermansyah (2016: 91) in their research find that not only Dayak Kanayant but also Dayak in common who live in Embau, Kapuas Hulu become Moslem and regard themselves as Malayan. On his another writing, Hermansyah explains that most of Dayak choose Christian as their formal religion while some of Dayak who become Moslem are considered as Malayan (2018: 57). In contrast, Subet et al. affirm that most Dayak Bidayuh in Sarawak become Christian or Catholic (2013, 1-2) while most of Dayak Lundayeh become Christian (Ganang, dkk, 2018: 172). Mujiburrahman et al. expound that Dayak in Central Borneo become Kaharingan Christian (2015: 270). Herianto et al. state that Dayak in Central Borneo obey Kaharingan belief system which exists for a long time ago whereas some of them believe in Islam and Christian (2018: 132). Nowadays, Bidayuh Dayak in Benuak, Sarawak change their former religion to Christian (Chua 2012: 8). Most of Dayak Iban in Samarahan, Sarawak already become Christian. However, they still follow animism practice (Jawol et al 2018: 120).

The decision made by most of Dayak to be religious adherent does not make them to ignore their former beliefs. This is in line with a research done by Winahyuningsih and Maulana (2013: 22) who describe that Dayak, majorly, still preserve their believe even though they already become religious adherent. This phenomenon is remarkable because the concepts between the belief and the religion are clearly different. Based on the research done by Prasojo on how globalization influences the dynamics of religious, ethnicity, and identity of Dayak Katab Kebahan in West Borneo who become Moslem. Local residents who are Christian commonly affiliate with Malayan Dayak who are Moslem. However, Dayak Katab Kebahan still preserve their ethno religious identity as Moslem Dayak. In common, they think that historically they are Dayak even though they become Moslem. They are proud of their identity. In fact, the interaction among Dayak who are Moslem with those who are Christian and ethno religious strengthen their Islamic identity indeed (2011).

The phenomenon, Dayak who already become religious adherent but still

preserve primitive religion by doing rice harvesting ritual, is remarkable so that it is interesting to be researched. There is always particular reason that underlies this phenomenon. Through this research, the researchers try to find out the underlying reason why the phenomenon exists. In order to find out the reason, the researchers observe two rice harvesting rituals which are Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango. Gawai Dayak is done in Pontianak, the capital of West Borneo. Meanwhile, Naik Dango is done by Kanayant Dayak in Sungai Ambawang, Kubu Raya, Pontianak, West Borneo. Besides observing the rituals, interview with some elders and youths of Dayak is done.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are the manifestation of Dayak's gratitude to Jubata. Gawai means ritual to show gratitude of abundant harvest (Astuti and Taum 2017: 5). Naik Dango has more specific meaning. According to Wina, Naik Dango means storing the rice in dango (barn) (2017: 110). Naik Dango is the ritual for praying then bringing the rice into the barn (Tindarika 2015: 6), while according to Wina, Naik Dango means saving and keeping the rice in the dango or barn (2017: 110).

Gawai Dayak as well as Naik Dango done by Dayak Kanayant are started by doing Ngampar Bide. Ngampar Bide is a religious activity which has purpose to ask permission to the ancestors' spirit so that Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango can be done well. In the process of doing Ngampar Bide, there is Nyangahatn activity. In doing Nyangahatn, it must be completed with many kind of ritual offerings.

The method used in this research was qualitative method involving case study as the research strategy. Case study is an intensive study used to investigate particular case (Gerring 2007: 20). Hancock and Algozzine (2006: 24) state that case study is the development of in-depth understanding on specific case. It is related to the understanding on a phenomenon, activity, or process that involves one or more individuals, while Yin describes that case study is a kind of popular strategy focuses to observe specific phenomenon that happens in real life context (2003: 1).

The researchers used structured and unstructured interview. Twenty randomly sampled informants were interviewed. The informants were 1) Yakobus (YK), 2) Puspojosius (PY), 3) Fransiskus Kadim (FK), 4) Bagas (BG), 5) Bakuweng (BK), 6) Yustina (YS), 7) Saliminahoy (SH), 8) Emilia (EM), 9) Pinsensius (PS), 10) Maria Sinyong (MS), 11) Wili (WL), 12) Aliysius (AS), 13) Markon (MK), 14) Pascalis Ridho (PR), 15) Donaltus (DT), Yolanda Darmisa (YD), 16) Hesti (HT), 17) Niken (NK), 18) Wewen (WW), 19) Toni (TN), and 20) Riska (RK). Besides interviewing the informants, the researchers did observation to collect research data related to the rituals, Gawai Dayak and Naek Dango, done by Dayak Kana

yant in West Borneo. The researchers triangulate the data sources, methods, and theories. Data from varied sources were collected, data collected through different methods were compared and contrasted, and different theoretical perspectives were used to interpret the same data (Pawito 2007: 99-100).

### 3. RESULTS

#### ELEMENT OF ANIMISM IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RICE HARVEST RITUAL CEREMONY

Through Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, Dayak Kanayant believe in the existence of spirit. They believe in spirit who dwells in water and land. This spell shows that people believe in spirit who dwells in water "sangahe bunyi cande tentekng" (how loud is the sound of the bell rung) "baliukng tadangar panyakng ka' pusat ai'" (from the beliung heard in the whirlpool). It can also be seen from other spell "asa', dua, talu, empat, lima, anam, tujuh...oh Jubata nang badiamp kak ae'..." (Jubata who controls deepwater). Based on the spell, the sound of the beliung makes their wish heard. The researchers relate this matter with a spell "basaru' basimpado man kita' Jubata (call and beg God) (that comes from the ruler of water and land). In this case, when beliung is rung, the wish can be heard by the ruler of the water. This "saparati empat ka' ampu ai' tanah" (that comes from the ruler of water and land) spell is also aimed to call spirits who dwell in land. The spell is casted so that they are protected from evil spirits "minta' banto' minta' tulukng ka' palaya' ka' sami'" (protect us along the road to home).

Based on the trait, spirit can be divided into two which are good and evil spirit. According to YK, Dayak believe that both good and evil spirit exist in the rituals (2018). Good spirits also dwell in pantak. Pantak is a statue that symbolizes their powerful ancestral spirit. Pabinta ka' pantak (begging to pantak) is aimed to ask for protection when Gawai Dayak is done. Adrianus et al. (2016: 136) emphasizes that "pantak as a cultural product is a manifestation of Dayak Kanayant's belief in their ancestor". Temporarily, according to Bakueng and Yustina (2018), "pantak is a statue that symbolizes respected and powerful ancestors",

The above explanation is in line with TN (2018) who states that "pantak is the symbol of the descendant of their ancestor". Moreover, TN says that "before Nyangahatn is done in Betang, Dayak ask (bapinta) for their ancestor's protection". They believe that pantak has hidden, unknown, and supernatural power. Dayak call that ancestor's supernatural power as Jubata and Pama (Preptantya dan Kasniyah 2003: 84).

In doing Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, beside the belief in the existence of spirit, Dayak who live in Ambawang believe in the presence of baras banyu. It is a little amount of rice that is combined with oil. This is believed to be the savior for the

participants of the ritual. While casting the spell, *baras banyu* is rubbed in the forehead.

People's belief in the existence of spirits emerges unique and religious practice such as offering. Offering is one of several things that should be prepared in the ritual. In Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, offerings are also given to Jubata and the ancestors. It is supported by Mr Wewen (2018), a Panyangahtn in Ambawang "Offerings should be given to evil spirits so that they do not interrupt the rituals".

#### ELEMENT OF DYNAMISM IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RICE HARVEST RITUAL CEREMONY

In doing Gawai Dayak or Naik Dango ritual, dynamism can be seen from the spell casted by Panyagahatn as the Nyangahatn ritual is done. From the first spell, it can be seen from the following verse "...saparati ampat ka' ampu ai' tanah", it is also found in the next verse "minta' banto' minta' tulukng ka' palaya' ka' sami'" (that comes from the ruler of water and land, protect us along the road and home. Moreover, the same thing is also found in the second spell "...Jubata nang badiamp kak ae', tanah tinggi, puhutn ayak, puhutn tinggi Kita' karamat ai' tanah nang mampu nunu ai' sakayu, nyambong sengat Kami bapinta kami bapadah, ame babadi kak kami talino manunsia" (Jubata who rules deep water, high ground, and big and tall trees. The ruler of water and earth who is able to burn water in river and resurrect life. We ask and preach, do not spread illness to humans).

Based on Nyangahatn spell above, Dayak commonly believe that in certain places, big and tall tree, deepwater, and high ground have power or magical value. There are supernatural power that protect them. Similarly, YK (2018) states that the spells casted in Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are aimed at certain place. Hendropuspito affirms that the ancestral spirits dwell in spring, river, ocean, mountain, and any other place (1983: 33). This kind of dynamism concept is also believed by Dayak who live in Malaysia. They believe that forest, mountain, big tree, and hill have mystical forces (Daud 2012: 183). Thus, Dayak prepare offerings to be put in those places.

#### THE REASONS OF FOLLOWING INDIGENOUS BELIEF IN THE RICE HARVESTING RITUALS

Emphasizing the importance of this research is needed since Dayak still preserve the rituals, Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, done by their encestors.

Earlier, it is stated that animism and dynamism are still found even though Dayak already become religious adherent. According to Harwati, Dayak think that offering is one of media used to communicate with supernatural world (2013: 32).

The conflict between Christian and Igbo in Nigeria becomes one of the reasons why it is important to know the underlying reasons why Dayak do the rituals. Similar with other indigenous beliefs, Igbo connects people with the God and the ancestors (Okeke et al 2017: 2). Christian teachings are different with that of Igbo so that conflict occurs. The conflict starts when the youths know Christian teachings whereas Igbo teaches them to hold on their ancestral teachings (4). This is different with the youths of Dayak, they know both their religion teachings and their ancestral teachings well. The differences on the teachings do not generate conflict. They are even proud of their identity.

Based on the interview result, the fundamental reason of doing Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango is preserving traditions. Mr PY (2018) as one of Dayak Kanayant elder who lives in Ambawang, West Borneo and becomes Catholic, states in the interview that "Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are Dayak's identity. By doing the rituals, they maintain their identity that gradually disappears". Ethnic identity is the people's traits that hold onto their ancestral legacy which is different from one ethnicity to another (Hussin 2008: 173). BG (2018), a Catholic, states that "The participation in Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango aims to preserve the ritual inherited by the ancestors". In the process of Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, BG clearly understands the different fundamental concepts between his indigenous belief and his religion. However, as a youth, it is his responsibility to preserve the traditions.

Similar thinking is also uttered by YK (2018), one of Dayak Kanayant elder that becomes Catholic. YK who lives as an elder in Sulebagus, Korek, Sungai Ambawang utters that "Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are ways to preserve the traditions". PY also believes that Dayak already develops either their education, religion, or environment. Therefore, through Gawai Dayak and ritual Naik Dango, youths are supposed to preserve their identity. Besides being ways to preserve identity, YK emphasizes that "Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are ways used by Dayak to show their gratitude to Jubata who give them prosperity. Hence, in the process of doing the rituals, people share what they have got to others as well as prepare offerings to spirits and Jubata".

The statement above is highlighted by a Catholic, FK (2018) "Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are aimed to preserve the inherited traditions". Consequently, in the process of Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, children and youths are involved". According to HT (2018), Dayak who becomes Moslem, "By participating in Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, I am take part in preserving the tradi

tions". The effort of preserving the traditions by involving youths are needed. By doing so, traditions are preserved even though youths are exposed to globalization (Lenzerini 2011: 102).

In addition as a way to preserve traditions, the rituals aim to bond different Dayak tribes because conflict frequently occurs among the tribes. Bell explains that, if we observe the rituals from cognitive and phenomenological perspective, the rituals aim to unite people (1997: 12). A conflict faced by Long Mekar Dayak is caused by land seizure and chief election. Other tribes frequently take benefit from them since they have no good mindset and education. Moreover, since there are many Dayak sub-tribes who have different mindset, conflict of interest commonly happens (Maunati 2004: 224).

Related to the different beliefs, some principles about preserving the tradition (including in Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango) do not contradict the principles of the religion (PY 2018). One of the same principle is called as baburukg, the ritual done when people of Dayak want to apply traditional farming system. They firstly aks for Jubata's guidance before starting to farm. In Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, Dayak also pray to ask for Jubata's guidance. This is called as Nyangahatn, a kind of ritual when spell to ask for Jubata's permission and protection is casted. Besides being considered to have the same principles, according to YK, Dayak tend to follow the tradition in doing Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango. It means that they put aside their religion (In Central Borneo, the customary leader who is Moslem even does the same).

As stated by Mr BK and Mrs YS (2018) "Most of Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango concepts contradict the religious concepts. This is because of the spells casted and the offerings". Responding to the differences, they still think that the purpose of the rituals are the same which is worshipping God even though the ways are contradictory. The offerings are given to the dead so that it contradicts the religious concept. Similarly, SH (2018) states that "Every religion refers to God (Jubata). Thus, Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango still exist as the aim is the same which is worshipping God".

SH (2018) adds that Dayak acknowledge the tradition first so that they still preserve the tradition even though some processes in either Gawai Dayak or Naik Dango may be different with the religious principles. EM (2018) utters that tradition exists a long way before so that people follow it in their daily life. Consequently, although they already have certain religion, rituals such as Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are still done and offerings are still prepared. There is also a statement telling that Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango has nothing to do with religion, it is purely related to culture. PS (2018) states that Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango is related to tradition; it has no relation with

particular religion. MS (2018) also states that there are some things in rice harvesting ritual which contradict Islamic shari'a. Furthermore, MS says the reason why he still becomes the participant of the ritual though he is now a Moslem. MS states that the ritual is associated with arts and culture not a specific religion. It is supported by WL's (2018) opinion that Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango are rituals that are associated with the culture. Specifically, WL states that people cannot leave rituals behind since those are inherited by their ancestors. AS (2018) asserts that the rituals are related to Dayak's tradition and culture. Religion and tradition are two inseparable things so that both should be carried out side by side.

Responding to the different concepts, MK (2018) as a Catholic states that "Tradition exists beforehand so that rituals are aimed to respect the ancestors. In addition, when performing Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango, people also worship God". Temporarily, PR (2018) as a Catholic utters that "There are different fundamental concepts between the rituals and the religion. However, as the rituals are inherited by the ancestors, people still do it to respect them".

As stated by DT (2018), as a Dayak who becomes Catholic, the rituals bond the youths as they take a part. They also become more religious and proud of their identity. Furthermore, they preserve the tradition. YD (2018), who becomes Catholic, sees Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango as tradition. It is stated that "It is tradition. It has nothing to do with certain religion. As Dayak, we should preserve the rituals". Related to the different concepts between the former belief and the religion, YD emphasizes that "the same thing between the two are that both refer to God". Hence, there is no reason to leave the rituals behind, NK (2018) has nothing to do with the religion. They are based on the Bhineka Tunggal Ika principle. Thus, a certain religion does not prevent them to follow the rituals.

From the informants' statements, it is found that the reason why they still participate in rice harvesting ritual is similar. The researchers even consider that all the informants have the same mindset. The reason of participating in the rituals is the same though all of them are aware of the different concepts between the rituals and their religion. Besides, another fundamental reason why the rituals still exist is preserving the identity as Dayak.

## CONCLUSION

The researchers formulate five main points that become the underlying reasons why Dayak still do and follow rice harvesting ritual. 1) to preserve the tradition, this is the most fundamental reason as each Gawai Dayak and Naik Dango participant (both the elders and the youths) states this as the reason of

participating in the ritual inherited by their ancestor; 2) to preserve their identity as Dayak, 3) to worship God (Jubata) even through different way, 4) to show that the beginning of their life starts from the tradition rather than the religion, and 5) to respect their ancestors.

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